# The Narrative of Terminally Regressing Muslims

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## Abstract

This article examines the origins and persistence of the narrative of "Terminally Regressing Muslims," which portrays Muslim civilisation as having entered an irreversible decline. It traces the development of this perception from the Medieval European mindset, shaped by religious rivalry and conflict, through Orientalist thought and, later, colonial discourse, in which assumptions of Muslim backwardness helped legitimise imperial domination. The article contrasts this narrative with the historical record of Muslim resilience and recovery from major political, military, economic and intellectual setbacks. It also uses selected indicators of defence, education, human resources, and the economy to determine whether Muslims are progressing or regressing in the current world. The direction of their movement clearly points to a complete absence of terminal regression.

## 1 Introduction

The narrative of "Terminally Regressing Muslims" is one of the most persistent intellectual constructions surrounding the Muslim world. It rests on the assumption that Muslim societies, having once reached a high point of civilisation, entered an irreversible and permanent decline from which they have been unable to recover. This article examines the historical origins of that narrative and challenges the idea that the setbacks experienced by Muslim societies represent evidence of an inherent or terminal civilisational regression.

The roots of this perception can be traced to the Medieval European mindset, in which Islam was frequently understood not simply as a neighbouring civilisation but as a religious, political and military rival. Medieval polemics and conflicts helped create enduring images of Muslims as opponents of Christian Europe. Over time, these inherited assumptions were transformed and given new intellectual authority through Orientalism**,** which increasingly portrayed the East as static, irrational and incapable of modern development in comparison with a supposedly dynamic and progressive West. During the colonial period, such ideas became further embedded in colonial discourse, where the alleged backwardness of colonised people was often

used to justify foreign domination and the supposed “civilising mission” of imperial powers.

Yet history presents a more complex picture. Muslim societies have experienced profound political, military, economic and intellectual setbacks, including invasions, the destruction of major centres of learning, imperial fragmentation and colonial domination. However, they have repeatedly demonstrated the capacity for recovery, adaptation and renewal. The history of the Muslim world is therefore not a simple story of continuous decline, but one of setbacks followed by resilience, reconstruction and transformation.

This article explores the historical development of the narrative of terminal Muslim regression and contrasts it with the record of recovery and development across Muslim societies. It also refers to the extensive nation-building, educational, scientific, technological, economic and infrastructural development undertaken after the achievement of political independence from the colonial occupation. By placing contemporary Muslim societies within a longer historical perspective, the article argues that the notion of a permanently and terminally regressing Muslim civilisation is less an objective historical conclusion than a narrative shaped by particular European intellectual traditions and repeatedly reproduced in modern discourse.

## 2 Narratives Impact Minds

Throughout history, one of the most effective ways of influencing public opinion has been the repeated use of narratives. A narrative is more than a collection of facts; it is a story that gives meaning to events, identifies heroes and villains, and explains the world. When such a story is repeated consistently across speeches, media, education, entertainment, and social conversation, it gradually becomes familiar. Familiarity often creates acceptance, even when the underlying claims are incomplete, exaggerated, or false.

Psychologists refer to one aspect of this process as the "illusory truth effect," a tendency for people to perceive repeated statements as more believable than unfamiliar ones. This does not necessarily mean that repetition changes objective reality; rather, it changes the ease with which the brain processes information. Familiar ideas require less mental effort, and people may unconsciously equate that ease with truth.

Narrative repetition works through several techniques. First is message consistency**.** Repeating the same core idea with only slight variations across different platforms creates the impression of overwhelming evidence. Second is emotional appeal**.** Stories that evoke fear, hope, pride, anger, or sympathy are remembered more readily than dry facts. Third is selective framing. By highlighting certain facts while

ignoring others, a narrative can shape how audiences interpret complex events without necessarily presenting false information.

Another important technique is social reinforcement**.** When people hear the same narrative from politicians, journalists, celebrities, educators, friends, and social media, they are more likely to assume it reflects a broad consensus. Humans naturally look to others when forming opinions, especially in uncertain situations. This phenomenon, known in psychology as social proof, makes repeated narratives even more persuasive.

## 2.1 Narratives, the Contemporary Battlefield

The "war of narratives" has emerged as a critical lens for understanding contemporary conflicts, strategic communication, and the broader struggle for influence in the information age. Far from being a mere adjunct to physical conflict, the battle over narratives is increasingly recognised as a central, even foundational, element of modern warfare and international relations [1]. This intellectual battlefield is characterised by efforts to shape perceptions, influence beliefs, and ultimately mobilise or demobilise populations by controlling the dominant stories told about events, actors, and ideologies.

This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in the realm of hybrid warfare and cognitive warfare. Hybrid threats often blur the lines between conventional and unconventional tactics, integrating military, economic, diplomatic, and informational tools. Within this framework, narratives become potent weapons, used to sow discord, undermine trust, and polarise societies without direct military engagement [2, 3]. Cognitive warfare explicitly targets the human mind as a battlespace, aiming to manipulate perceptions, instigate conflicting narratives, and fracture social cohesion. It seeks to overload individuals with repeated narratives, thereby shaping their understanding and decision-making processes [4]. This involves not only presenting facts but also framing them in a way that resonates with target audiences, tapping into existing cultural values, historical grievances, and emotional responses. The objective is to establish a dominant narrative that shapes public opinion, influences policy decisions, and fosters a desired understanding of reality. Consequently, understanding and engaging in the war of narratives is no longer an optional component of individuals but a fundamental requirement for navigating the complexities of the modern global landscape.

The applications of narrative warfare are diverse, ranging from geopolitical rivalries to domestic political struggles. States employ strategic narratives to justify foreign policy actions, counter criticism, and build international coalitions. For instance, nations engage in narrative competition to frame events like the Ukraine War, with Russia and Ukraine both actively using propaganda to influence global perceptions. Similarly, China utilises narratives of "East rising, West falling" and Western

hypocrisy to challenge the existing international order and promote its own model of governance [2].

The battle for narratives is fought across multiple audiences, domestic populations, adversaries, diasporas, and international institutions and through various channels, including traditional media, social media, and digital propaganda machinery [5]. The effectiveness of a narrative lies in its ability to resonate, persuade, and ultimately shape behaviour.

## 3. The Origin of the Narrative in Focus

The later Western narrative of Muslims as a people destined for permanent decline cannot be understood entirely apart from the intellectual and cultural mindset that developed in medieval Christian Europe. Medieval Europe encountered Islam not merely as a neighbouring civilisation but as a powerful religious, political and intellectual rival. The Muslim world-controlled territories in the Mediterranean, possessed major centres of learning, and preserved and expanded knowledge in philosophy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy and other sciences. Consequently, European perceptions of Islam were frequently shaped by religious polemic, political rivalry and the experience of conflict.

Medieval Christian polemical literature commonly portrayed Islam as a false religion and Muslims as intellectually or morally deficient. Such representations were not neutral descriptions of Muslim societies; they served to strengthen Christian identity and justify opposition to a competing civilisation. During the Crusading period, for example, Muslims were frequently represented through highly stereotyped categories rather than understood on their own intellectual and historical terms.

### 3.1 Medieval European Misconceptions about Muslims

Medieval Europe's understanding of Islam was largely shaped by a complex interplay of religious rivalry, political conflict, and profound ignorance. As the Islamic world expanded and flourished, Christian Europe, often feeling threatened, constructed a distorted image of Islam and its Prophet, Muhammad (pbuh). These fabrications, born out of polemical necessity and a lack of direct engagement with authentic Islamic sources, became deeply entrenched in the European consciousness, influencing theology, literature, and art for centuries.

One of the most pervasive and enduring falsehoods in medieval Europe was the belief that Muslims worshipped Muhammad (pbuh) as a deity or an idol. This misconception was a deliberate distortion, designed to portray Islam as a form of paganism, thereby undermining its monotheistic claims and presenting it as a false religion. In reality, Islam strictly adheres to the oneness of God (Allah) and vehemently rejects the worship of any created being. Medieval texts, particularly epic poems and chansons de geste, frequently depicted Muslims (often referred to as

"Saracens") as worshipping a pantheon of gods, among whom Muhammad (pbuh) was central. Other supposed deities included "Tervagant" and "Apollin" [6].

Another vivid manifestation of this falsehood was the myth of the "idol of Mahomet." This myth suggested that an actual physical idol of Muhammad (pbuh) was worshipped by Muslims, often depicted as a grotesque figure. Stories circulated of Christian crusaders discovering and destroying these idols in conquered territories, further solidifying the image of Muslims as idolaters [7]. The idea of Muhammad (pbuh) as a pagan deity continued to appear in English literature as late as the 16th and 17th centuries, notably in plays and poems [8].

The lack of direct knowledge about Islam among the general European populace, coupled with the deliberate efforts of Christian polemicists, allowed this falsehood to thrive. Even after the first Latin translation of the Qur'an in the 12th century, commissioned by Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny, the polemical tradition often prioritised misrepresentation over accurate understanding [9]. The myth served a crucial function: it simplified a complex religious and political rival into a familiar, easily condemned category of paganism, making it easier to justify military action and religious condemnation.

Many medieval accounts claimed that Muhammad (pbuh) was originally a Christian who, after failing to achieve ecclesiastical office, fabricated a new religion by combining elements of Judaism and Christianity, often with the help of renegade monks or heretics [10]. This narrative served to reduce Islam to a corrupted form of Christianity, denying its independent divine origin. He was often described as a sorcerer who used magic to enthral his followers, or as an epileptic whose seizures were misinterpreted as divine revelations [11].

The idea of Muhammad (pbuh) as a fallen Christian or a false prophet was a cornerstone of anti-Islamic polemics from the 8th century onwards, gaining particular prominence during the Crusades. Works like the Epistola Saraceni (Letter of a Saracen) and the Liber Denudationis (Book of Unveiling), though often attributed to Muslim authors, were Christian fabrications designed to expose the supposed flaws of Islam from within [6].

One of the most famous and persistent of these was the myth of Muhammad's (pbuh) iron coffin, suspended in mid-air by magnets in Mecca. The myth claimed that Muhammad's (pbuh) body, enclosed in an iron coffin, was miraculously suspended without visible support, often attributed to powerful magnets in the ceiling of his tomb in Mecca [12]. Muhammad (pbuh) is buried in Medina, not Mecca, and his tomb is a conventional grave.

Other absurdities included tales of Muhammad (pbuh) training a dove to peck grains from his ear, making it appear as if the Holy Spirit was whispering divine messages to him [6]. The myth of the suspended coffin appeared in European texts as early as

the 12th century and continued to be widely circulated for over 600 years, appearing in travelogues, encyclopaedias, and even serious theological works until at least the 18th century [13]. Medieval Christian polemicists frequently characterised Islam as a religion spread solely by the sword, emphasising military conquest while ignoring the complex historical realities of Islamic expansion, which often involved treaties, conversions, and periods of peaceful coexistence [14]. Some European theologians misinterpreted Islamic concepts of divine decree (qadar) as absolute predestination, suggesting that Muslims believed in a fatalistic worldview that stifled human agency and innovation. This, according to them, contrasted with Christian emphasis on free will and moral responsibility, portraying Islam as a religion that discouraged progress and individual initiative [15].

A common misconception was that Islam completely rejected all figures from the Judeo-Christian tradition. In reality, Islam reveres many prophets shared with Judaism and Christianity, including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, considering them prophets of God. The Qur'an speaks highly of Jesus and Mary. Medieval polemics often ignored these shared figures to emphasise a complete theological rupture [16].

Medieval texts often reduced the Islamic concept of Paradise to a purely sensual and carnal realm, filled with earthly delights and sexual gratification. This caricature ignored the spiritual dimensions of the Islamic Paradise, which emphasise closeness to God, peace, and righteous rewards, and was used to portray Islam as a religion appealing to base desires rather than spiritual elevation [17].

## 3.2 Modern Reassessment in the West

Modern Western scholarship has undertaken a significant effort to deconstruct and correct these medieval falsehoods. Historians, orientalists (in the modern, critical sense), and religious studies scholars have meticulously analysed medieval texts, comparing them with authentic Islamic sources to expose the distortions and fabrications. Scholars like John V. Tolan**,** in works such as *Faces of Muhammad: Western Perceptions of the Prophet of Islam from the Middle Ages to Today*, have meticulously traced the evolution of these myths, demonstrating their origins in polemical necessity rather than factual observation [7]

Modern history emphasises the intellectual and cultural exchanges between the Islamic world and Europe, highlighting the significant contributions of Muslim scholars to science, philosophy, and medicine, which were often obscured by medieval polemics. There is a concerted effort to move beyond the simplistic binaries of "us vs. them" and to understand the medieval encounter with Islam in its full complexity.

As European power expanded from the Renaissance into the modern colonial period, some elements of these older representations were transformed rather than completely abandoned. The image of the Muslim as irrational, stagnant, despotic or incapable of modern development became increasingly embedded in Orientalist and colonial discourse. European modernity was consequently presented as the natural endpoint of historical progress, while Muslim societies were positioned in an inferior stage of civilisation.

### 3.3 Medieval Misconceptions Still Linger on in the Western Mind

The modern narrative of the “Terminally Regressing Muslims” can therefore be viewed partly as a secularised descendant of older medieval binaries: Christian versus Muslim, civilised versus barbaric, progressive versus stagnant. The historical message of this understanding is that historical setbacks were converted into an essentialist theory of a permanent Muslim incapacity. Such a theory overlooks the substantial intellectual, demographic, educational, technological and institutional transformations occurring across many contemporary Muslim-majority societies.

In contemporary Western society, there is a complex and often contradictory reaction to these historical falsehoods about Islam. While academic scholarship has largely debunked these medieval myths, their echoes continue to resonate in public discourse, contributing to modern Islamophobia.

Political rhetoric, media portrayals, and popular culture sometimes inadvertently or deliberately draw upon these historical tropes, perpetuating negative stereotypes. The "othering" of Muslims, rooted in medieval polemics, contributes to a climate where discrimination and prejudice can flourish.

## 4. Birth of the Narrative and its Current State

The narrative of “Terminally Regressing Muslims” did not originate in a single statement or event.  The medieval mindset about Islam, discussed in Section 3, was ready for an immediate acceptance of the narrative. The mechanism that strengthened the narrative was selective historical memory by influential scholars. Ernest Renan, through his famous lecture of March 1883 on Islam and Science [18], created a narrative that took the shape of Terminally Regressing Muslims over time. In Renan’s words, “ Islam is far removed from anything that could be called rationalism or science …..Islam is the heaviest chain that humankind has ever borne …..Decadence and intellectual sterility are the hallmarks of states governed by Islam …..Narrow-mindedness of a true believer of Islam makes him incapable of learning anything or of opening to any new idea …..What essentially distinguishes the Muslim is the hatred of science…..From 1200, philosophy was abolished in Muslim countries, killing science and philosophy……”[18]. No wonder that Jamal ud Din Afghani questioned Renan’s racism during a meeting with him. An Islam-hater

scholar is the early flag-bearer of the narrative of Terminally Regressing Muslims. His selective historical memory is prominently on display in his works.

Eyyup Yilmaz rightly observed that “Renan, who thought he was carrying the cultural debates and religious polemics of earlier periods into a supposedly “scientific” arena, was in fact constructing an Orientalist structure of knowledge**.** More importantly, with reference to Edward Said, these narratives, which reinforced certain perceptions of the East in general and the Islamic world in particular, were built not upon objective realities but upon political and cultural discursive superiority” [19].

The narrative was produced over several centuries through the interaction of Orientalist scholarship, colonial administration, selective histories of modernity, security politics, and mass-media repetition. Its growth can be seen in stages.

## 4.1 Invention of a Contrasting ‘Orient’

Early Christian writers generally interpreted Islam through categories that already existed within Christian thought, such as heresy, paganism or religious error. The Christian writers frequently distorted Islamic beliefs to fit Muslims into pre-existing categories of the religious “Other.” This process was important because it established a pattern that would survive for centuries: Muslims were not always encountered and described on their own terms. Instead, they were frequently defined in relation to Christian assumptions.

Norman Daniel’s classic ‘Islam and the West: The Making of an Image’ provides an extensive study of this process [10]. Daniel examines medieval Christian understanding of Islam, Christian attacks on Islamic beliefs and the development of recurring ideas about Muhammad (pbuh), the Qur’an and Muslim religious practices. The book remains one of the major works on the historical construction of Western images of Islam. The crucial point is that the earliest stage was primarily religious rather than historical. The central claim was not yet that Muslims were permanently backward; it was that Islam was false, erroneous or threatening.

The narrative begins with a relational distinction between a self-styled modern Europe and an imagined, timeless Orient. Edward Said’s ‘Orientalism’ remains the foundational account of this process. Said examined an organised body of knowledge about the Middle East that expanded alongside European power [17]. Said’s work is a credible reference on the current state of knowledge in the field. The central point is not that every European scholar consciously fabricated information. Rather, knowledge was gathered within institutions and political relationships that positioned Europe as the observer and the Orient as the object of observation.

The “Orient” became an abstract opposite, emotional rather than rational, static rather than progressive, despotic rather than free, and traditional rather than modern [17]. Once these oppositions were established, Muslims could be described not as

people living under particular political and economic conditions, but as embodiments of an allegedly defective civilisation. The category was broad enough to erase differences among Arabs, Persians, Turks, South Asians, Africans, Southeast Asians, and European Muslims, while making a constructed regional image appear natural.

## 4.2 The Narrative Becomes Part of the Colonial Administration

The nineteenth century added a new and powerful dimension: European colonial rule over large Muslim populations. European empires increasingly governed Muslim territories in North Africa, South Asia, the Middle East and elsewhere. Colonial administrators and intellectuals frequently described colonised societies as backward, irrational, traditional or incapable of self-government. The colonial situation could consequently become evidence for the very theory that had helped justify colonialism

Colonialism gave the narrative a practical force. European empires did not merely circulate opinions about Muslim societies; they classified populations, regulated institutions, reorganised education, and decided which forms of knowledge counted as legitimate. The “applied Orientalism” connected scholarship to imperial governance [20]. The significance of such statements lies less in their factual accuracy than in their political function. If colonised peoples were defined as intellectually deficient or historically stalled, imperial tutelage could be presented as benevolent modernisation rather than domination. Colonial institutions could then claim authority to rescue, educate, discipline, or reform Muslims. In this way, “backwardness” became both an alleged cultural condition and a justification for colonisation. For the concept of the “Terminally Regressing Muslims”, the significance of Said’s work lies in showing how representations can become structures of power rather than merely collections of opinions. This is where Edward Said’s *Orientalism* becomes especially important. Said’s central argument was that Western representations of the “Orient” were connected to systems of knowledge and power. Orientalism did not simply describe Eastern societies; it helped establish a framework through which the East could be represented, classified and governed.

## 4.3 Selective Histories made Political Reversals Look Civilisational

Muslim achievements in mathematics, medicine, astronomy, philosophy, geography and other disciplines were partly acknowledged, but interpreted as belonging exclusively to a distant “Golden Age.” Later achievements were treated as exceptions rather than evidence against the general theory. Conversely, political fragmentation, military defeats, economic difficulties or intellectual disputes were presented as confirmation of a general civilisational decline.

The next stage was the conversion of complex historical change into a morality tale. Muslim-majority societies experienced military defeats, European economic expansion, imperial intervention, state crises, and internal struggles over reform. These were real historical developments, but the “regression” narrative treated them as evidence of an essential Muslim incapacity. It often remembered Europe’s rise as a universal model of progress while treating Muslim societies’ different routes through modernity as failure to catch up.

This interpretation also obscured Muslim intellectual agency. From the nineteenth century onward, Muslim reformers debated education, constitutionalism, science, law, gender, and the relationship between revelation and reason. Their positions ranged from selective borrowing from Europe to calls for religious renewal, anti-colonial liberation, or new syntheses of Islamic and modern institutions. Yet the narrative has repeatedly filtered out these debates or treated them as evidence that Muslims only regress.

## 4.4 The Current State of the Narrative

The claim that Muslims are “terminally regressing” is best understood not as an established analytical category but as a sweeping civilisational narrative. It compresses more than fifty Muslim-majority societies, and diverse Muslim minorities, into a single subject supposedly trapped in religious traditionalism, political failure, and social decline.

The narrative is increasingly challenged by historical research and the observable diversity of contemporary Muslim societies, although it survives in public commentary, political discourse and some scholarship. The modern global worldview increasingly challenges this generalisation. Countries with Muslim-majority populations display radically different experiences. Some have achieved substantial progress in education, industrialisation, infrastructure, science, technology, healthcare and economic development.

Contemporary scholarship has also questioned the assumption that civilisations possess fixed characteristics determining their permanent success or failure. Historical development is now more commonly understood in relation to colonialism, wars, international economic structures, state institutions, geography and political choices. Muslim societies, like European, Asian and other societies, have experienced periods of expansion, decline, recovery and transformation.

# 5 Ground Realities Show a Complete Absence of Terminal Regression

The colonial era offers a major example of the setback and a recovery process after the end of the colonial hold. From the eighteenth to the twentieth century, large parts of the Muslim world came under European imperial rule. Political sovereignty was severely weakened, and economic structures were reshaped under colonial interests. Yet the twentieth century witnessed widespread anti-colonial movements across Muslim-majority societies, leading to the emergence of independent states in the Middle East, South Asia, Africa, and Southeast Asia. Although postcolonial challenges remain substantial, this period again illustrates the capacity for collective recovery and reassertion of Muslim affirmation. Assessing the progress or regression of the Muslim world from its recent past to present through the lenses of Defence, Education, Human Resources, and Economy offers a sufficient framework for analysis.

## 5.1 Comparison of Defensive Capabilities of the Muslim World: 1950 vs. Today

“The defensive capabilities of Muslim-majority nations have undergone a radical transformation over the past seven decades, shifting from post-colonial dependency to a state of significant strategic autonomy and technological innovation. This evolution reflects a broader drive within the Muslim world to secure sovereignty and project influence in an increasingly complex global security environment” [21].

## 5.2 Comparison of Education in the Muslim World: 1950 vs. Today

“The educational landscape of the Muslim world has undergone a profound and multifaceted transformation since 1950. Moving from the shadow of colonial-era restrictions to widespread illiteracy, Muslim-majority nations have built expansive and modernised systems that prioritise both mass access and high-level scientific research. This evolution reflects a strategic commitment to human development as the cornerstone of national progress in the 21st century” [21].

## 5.3 Comparison of Human Resources of the Muslim World: 1950 vs. Today

“The transformation of human resources within the Muslim world since 1950 is one of the most significant demographic and social shifts of the modern era. From a largely agrarian and low-literacy population emerging from colonial rule, the Muslim world has evolved into a dynamic, youthful, and increasingly skilled global workforce. This comparison highlights the profound changes in population size, educational attainment, and workforce composition” [21].

### 5.4 Comparison of the Economy of Muslim Countries: 1950 vs. Today

“The economic trajectory of Muslim-majority nations over the past seven decades has been defined by a dramatic shift from agrarian, colonial-dependent structures to highly diversified, resource-rich, and increasingly influential global markets. This evolution reflects the complex interplay of decolonisation and a strategic pivot toward industrialisation and technology” [21].

## 6 Conclusions

Muslim societies historically recovered from significant setbacks of the Crusades and Mongol destruction. The political setbacks never caused terminal regression in Muslim societies. Having recovered from physical colonisation, Muslim countries are now recovering from its impacts. Here again, the signs of terminal regression are completely absent.

The narrative of ‘Terminally Regressing Muslims’ extends over centuries. Medieval European misconceptions of Islam created a mindset which prevailed for centuries. The misconceptions, although significantly corrected by the age of reason, lingered on in the Western mind. Some elements of these older representations were transformed rather than completely abandoned.

The image of the Muslim as irrational, stagnant, despotic or incapable of modern development became increasingly embedded in Orientalist and colonial discourses. European modernity was consequently presented as the natural endpoint of historical progress, while Muslim societies were positioned in an inferior stage of civilisation.

The current intellectual climate is gradually moving away from the deterministic idea of “terminal regression.” Instead, it supports a more nuanced worldview: the Muslim world is diverse, historically dynamic, and undergoing uneven but ongoing processes of political, economic, intellectual, and technological transformation. The narrative of Terminally Regressing Muslims therefore increasingly appears not as an objective law of history, but as an oversimplified interpretation shaped by particular historical and ideological perspectives.

The post-colonial experience of Muslims is a complex narrative of resilience, adaptation, and gradual recovery. It is a continuing effort to reconcile historical inheritance with the demands and opportunities of the modern age. The 21st century is witnessing the emergence of a Muslim world that is confident, technologically adept, economically vital, and socially evolving.

While challenges such as political instability, income inequality, and reliance on natural resources remain, the overall trajectory indicates substantial progress across the key indicators. The existence of disagreement is evidence of political and intellectual dynamism, not terminal stasis. The “Terminal” overstates the evidence and “regressing” obscures agency, variation and advancement. A thorough review of Muslims’ postcolonial advancements provides a robust foundation for seeing developments in the Muslim world which show that the narrative of Terminally Regressing Muslims is an increasingly outdated trope.

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